

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 04407 171227Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----172000Z 112577 /63

R 171035Z JUN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6760  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN FRG

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4407

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, IS, LE  
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 2852, STATE 140550

1. AS A NEWCOMER TO THIS FRUSTRATING SCENE, I AM  
CONTUNUALLY AMAZED AT THE CONTRASTING VERSIONS OF  
REALITY EMANATING FROM RADION PRESS, AND INTELLIGENCE  
REPORTS ABOUT THE SITUATION ALONG TH SOUTH LEBANESE  
BORDER. OBVIOUSLY IT IS A MESS, BUT WE HAVE NO  
INDICATIONS HERE WHICH SUBSTANTIATE THE THEORY THAT  
THE ISRAELIS ARE PLANNING TO OCCUPY ANY LEBANESE TERRITORY.  
I DISCUSSED SOUTH LEBANON WITH GENERAL SHLOMO GAZIT,  
DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, TWO DAYS AGO. HE  
INSISTS THAT CURRENT CLASHES THERE REPRESENT ONLY  
"MORE OF THE SAME." HE CLAIMS THAT THE PALESTINIAN  
FORCES ARE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED BY THE SYRIANS, AND AT  
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THIS POINT HE BELIEVES THE SYRIANS ARE NOT SEEKING  
TROUBLE WITH THE ISRAELIS. OUR ATTACHES HAVE BEEN TO  
THE AREA AT FREQUENT INTERVALS, AND I WAS THERE LAST  
SUNDAY. WE HAVE SEEN NO SIGNS OF THE MENACING BUILD-  
UP ALLEGEDLY REPORTED BY SOME GERMAN NEWSMAN. ISRAEL'S  
MOST AUTHORITATIVE MILITARY JOURNALIST, ZEEV SCHIFF,  
WHO HAS A SON STATIONED WITH AN ARMY UNIT ON THE LEBANESE

BORDER, ASSURED ME TODAY THAT HE KNOWS POSITIVELY THERE IS NO ISRAELI BUILD-UP, THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN SOME RECENT MANEUVERS AND TRAINING-READINESS EXERCISES NEARBY. (INCIDENTALLY, SCHIFF SAID HIS SON REPORTS THAT THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS "WITH WHOM HE HAS BEEN WORKING" ARE VERY MEDIOCRE SOLDIERS, AND THAT "WE HAVE TO DO ALL THEIR PLANNING FOR THEM.")

2. SINCE THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE OFFICE TUESDAY, JUNE 21, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO ONE WITH WHOM ONE COULD CONSULT OFFICIALLY AT THIS MOMENT, EVEN IF WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO DO SO. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, IS ALL BUT OUT TO LUNCH, WAITING FOR DAYAN.

3. HOWEVER, I WAS MEETING TODAY BY CHANCE WITH EZER WEIZMAN, WHO WILL BECOME BEGIN'S DEFENSE MINISTER. I DESCRIBED THE INCREASING WORRIES AND UNCERTAINTIES IN LEBANON ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS--AND ASKED HIM BLUNTLY WHAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS MIGHT BE IN THIS AREA. HE ASSURED ME CATEGORICALLY THAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT CONSIDER OCCUPYING ANY LEBANESE TERRITORY, SO LONG AS THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES REMAIN INTACT AS A BUFFER AGAINST PALESTINIAN OR SYRIAN PROXIMITY TO THE BORDER. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP THE "GOOD FENCE" OPEN, WILL CONTINUE TO HELP THE CHRISTIANS, AND FEELS BOTH A MORAL OBLIGATION AND STRONG SELF-INTEREST IN THEIR SURVIVAL.

4. WE WILL KEEP AS CLOSE A WATCH AS POSSIBLE ON THE  
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SITUATION. BUT I SENSE SOME PROBABILITY OF A PLO DIS-INFORMATION CAMPAIGN IN RECENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS TO WHICH WE ALL OBVIOUSLY NEED TO REMAIN ALERT. BEFORE BEGIN GOES TO WASHINGTON, HE HAS EVERY INCENTIVE TO TRY TO SUBMERGE HIS BELLICOSE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. ANY DELIBERATELY PROVOCATIVE ISRAELI MOVE IN LEBANON RIGHT NOW WOULD RUN COUNTER TO HIS MAJOR EFFORT TO PROVE TO PRESIDENT CARTER THAT HE SEEKS PEACE, NOT WAR.  
LEWIS

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PINS, IS, LE  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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